LOT 109
MARIO KLINGEMANN
B. 1970
MEMORIES OF PASSERSBY I
multiple GANs, two 4k screens, custom handmade chestnut wood console, which hosts AI
brain and additional hardware
wood console: 70 by 70 by 40 cm. 27 1/2 by 27 1/2 by 15 3/4 in.
each screen: 145 by 82.9 by 3.8 cm. 57 by 32 5/8 by 1 1/2 in.
Executed in 2018, this work is number 2 from an edition of 3, plus 2 artist's proofs.

ESTIMATE £30,000-40,000 GBP
Lot Sold: 40,000 GBP

PROVENANCE
Acquired directly from the artist by the present owner
EXHIBITED
Madrid, Colección Solo, Mario Klingemann. Memories of Passersby I, January - June 2019 (another work from the edition exhibited)

CATALOGUE NOTE
Memories of Passersby I is a pioneering work of artificial intelligence. Fully autonomous, it uses a complex system of neural networks to generate a never-ending stream of portraits, disquieting visions of male and female faces created by a machine. The artwork is presented as an installation piece: the AI machine is housed in a custom-made chestnut wood cabinet, connected to two framed screens.

Unlike earlier generative art installations, Memories of Passersby I does not contain a database. It is an AI brain, developed and trained by Mario Klingemann, which creates brand new portraits, pixel by pixel, in real time. The outputs displayed on screen are not random or programmed combinations of existing images but unique, AI-generated artworks.

The flow of images presented does not follow a predefined choreography but is the result of the AI interpreting its own output; the complex nature of this feedback loop means that no image will ever be repeated. Memories of Passersby I contains all the algorithms and GANs (generative adversarial networks) necessary to produce an endless succession of new images as long as it is running.

In this sense, Memories of Passersby I marks a significant step forward in the rapidly emerging field of AI art. Up until now, collectors have been able to acquire human-curated outputs of neural networks; Memories of Passersby I is a self-contained creative agent. Each edition will generate infinite portraits in its own way and, as such, can be considered unique.

To develop Memories of Passersby I, Klingemann trained his AI model using thousands of portraits from the 17th to 19th centuries. He created a Tinder-like application to accelerate the learning process and teach the machine his own aesthetic preferences, influenced by surrealist figures such as Max Ernst.

As a result, Memories of Passersby I presents uncanny interpretations of the human face, AI-generated examples of what André Breton referred to as “convulsive beauty.” At times, the images melt into abstract arrangements of pixels as the machine struggles to create a new portrait. For the viewer, Memories of Passersby I is a hypnotic experience, the opportunity to watch an AI brain “think” in real time and view truly unique portraits which are neither recorded nor repeated.

Mario Klingemann is a pioneer in the field of neural networks, computer learning, and AI art. He has worked with prestigious institutions including The British Library, Cardiff University and New York Public Library, and is Artist in Residence at Google Arts and Culture. His artworks have been exhibited at MoMA New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, the Photographers’s Gallery London, ZKM Karlsruhe and Centre Pompidou Paris. Klingemann received the British Library Labs Artistic Award 2016 and the Lumen Prize Gold Award 2018.